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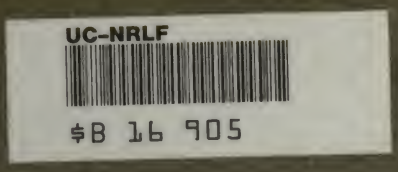

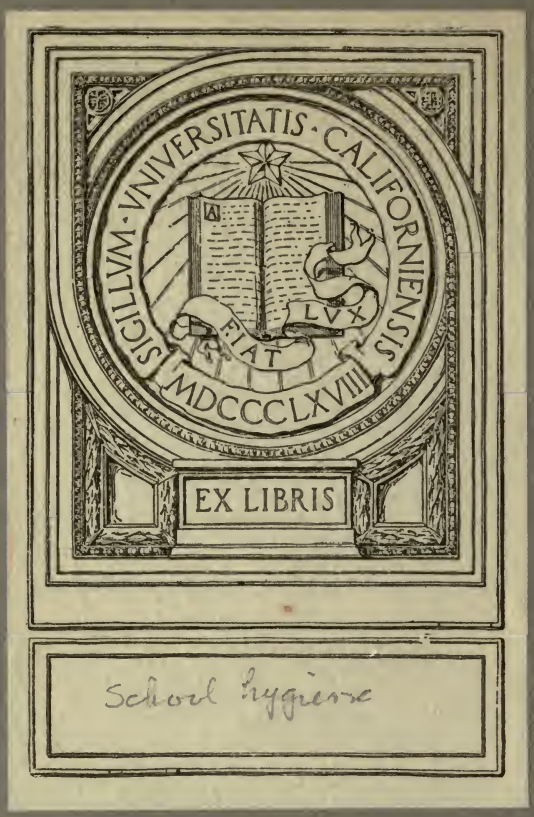

School hygiene

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THE WORK OF THE SCHOOL MEDICAL OFFICER

BY

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THE WORK OF THE SCHOOL MEDICAL OFFICER

I

The growth of the school medical service may be illustrated by the history of a single area. The Bradford School Board appointed a school medical officer (Dr. James Kerr) as long ago as 1893. The modern service, however, dates from 1907. The Education (Administrative Provisions) Act of 1907, a measure due in some degree to the Second International Congress for School Hygiene, set up a compulsory system of medical examination in public elementary schools, the local education authority being responsible for its conduct. The powers and duties conferred on the school medical officer by that Act are given in Circulars 576, 582, and 596, issued by the Board of Education under section 13; they are given in more concrete form in the report by Dr. Crowley, Dr. Kerr's successor, of the work done under the Act in the first year after its adoption. The report deals with the hygiene of school buildings, the co-relation of the school medical service with the public health administration of the city, the method of inspection in the school, the defects found and remedies undertaken, the work of special schools and the school clinic. Dr. Crowley had two assistant officers and one nurse; 1,431 children attended the clinic during the first six months of the year, and in the course of the year 3,658 children were inspected in the schools. In August 1908 the open-air school for physically defective children was begun—a type of school then comparatively novel in construction, administration, and régime, but the prototype, one feels now, of the ordinary school of the future. The facts revealed by inspection

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were broadly these: that too many of our school buildings were unsatisfactory in ventilation and lighting, were incompatible with robust health, and were responsible for some at least of the sad conditions of the physique of the children, such as some cases of defective sight and spinal curvature; that only about 37 per cent. of the children had anything like good nutrition; that 78 per cent. were dirty and at least one-fifth had very poor clothing; that there were at least 300 children in a school-population of about 40,000 with tuberculosis of the lungs, 120 children mentally defective and, like the 300 with consumption, a menace to the well-being of their town-life; finally, that at certain times of the year there might be over 1,000 children in need of food.

Since 1908 every year has contributed to the progress made in the realm of school hygiene by the Education Committee and its officials. In 1910 four new schools were proposed, amongst them a residential school for blind children, and two day-schools for deaf and crippled children respectively. There was instituted also the X-rays treatment of ringworm, which saved in one year over 70,000 school attendances owing to the rapidity and completeness of its cure. In the same year the first school dentist was appointed. In 1911 1,328 children were treated for defective vision and 1,059 were treated for dental disease. In 1912 three of the new schools, proposed in 1910, were being built, and in the play-ground of an ordinary school of one of the poorer districts the committee caused to be built an open-air classroom for the use of classes in rotation; in addition, a school centre was established for the older boys amongst the mentally defective children. In this year 8,255 children were inspected in the schools, 9,374 were dealt with at the clinic for general diseases, 6,279 of whom were actually treated, and 870 were treated for defective vision. In 1913 10,696 children were inspected in the schools, 8,004 treated at the clinic, and 1,031 treated for

defective vision. Arrangements were made for the operative treatment of diseases of the throat, nose, ear, and eye, and a consulting surgeon appointed to do this work. These figures of the successive years give the best evidence of the really enormous growth of the work, in conjunction with the following statement regarding the staff in 1913, which comprised the following: five whole-time medical officers; an ophthalmic and throat surgeon; two whole-time dental surgeons; five nurses; and a supervisor of remedial exercises for the treatment of children with spinal curvature, paralysis, or rickets. There are now, 1916, two supervisors of remedial exercises.

Any survey of the evolution of school hygiene in this city would be incomplete without reference to the system of school baths and bathing, the school kitchen and school feeding. Provision is now made for over 8,000 children to receive lessons in swimming during school hours at a public bath or one of the eight school-baths, the lessons being given fortnightly, save in the case of nineteen schools whose scholars receive the lessons weekly. It will not be long, one hopes, before all the schools have the privilege of this weekly visit, for its educational value is very high, nor long before each new school has its own attached swimming-bath.

The Education (Provision of Meals) Act, 1906, was adopted by the City Council in January 1907, and came into operation in May following. At the outset, for the working of the Act, an appeal for funds was made to the public, but these were shown to be insufficient for the purpose (as required by the Act), as also the ½*d.* rate, the limit then imposed by the Act, but since removed. The problem of how best to prepare and distribute the food was a unique one, very satisfactorily overcome. A large cooking-dépôt was established, comprising five steam-jacketed cooking-pans, two large gas-ovens, mechanical apple-parers, &c., and the food was distributed, as now, along with crockery and cutlery in specially designed

boxes and trays by special motor-wagons. It is now possible to supply daily meals at a cost of *2d.* a meal to 5,000 children, if necessary, in various parts of the city. The number of children receiving either dinner, breakfast, or both, for the first week in December 1914 was 3,520. Think what this means to the child-life of a great industrial city! Yet one cannot honestly say that every child in need of food, even now, receives it.

School feeding means more to the children than the mere receipt of food; it means an additional source of education, more care for the individual child on the part of the teachers who assist at the tables, and it may mean the acquisition by the child of gentle manners, courtesy, and respect. Every mother of a child at school may receive a copy of recipes for seventeen different, cheap dinners, recipes designed carefully with a view to variety and sufficiency by Dr. Crowley and Miss Cuff, the superintendent of domestic subjects. The mother of any school-child in this great city may thus know what are the best and cheapest meals to provide at home. It really looks as though we were beginning to undermine the bedrock of disease. We shall be well on the way to the happier land when we expend as much care and labour over the conditions of housing as we are now doing over the human habitations. Human beings are very flower-like.

An interesting piece of reform is the proposed open-air school for the mentally defective—a residential school—the building of which, however, has not yet actually commenced, as the plans are not finally approved by the Board of Education. On June 7 of 1912 the house for the older mentally deficient girls was opened. The children return home in the evening. New schools for deaf and crippled children are in working order. The word 'cripple' needs explanation—it implies in this instance such children, other than the consumptive and epileptic, who are too delicate to attend the ordinary

school, so that not all the children are such as we associate with the word; quite a good proportion are children with acquired or congenital heart disease. These schools are in one continuous crescent-shaped block with an intermediate spacious dining-hall; they are equipped with rooms for the teaching of special crafts, such as cookery, housewifery, laundry, tailoring, carpentry, boot-making, and metal-work; they are furnished also with spray-baths, a room for the dressing of minor surgical ailments and for medical inspection, and many requisites for the individual, such as Ilkley couches and special chairs. A lawn traverses the front, broken here and there by beds, in which the children can sow flower seeds and cultivate vegetables. Some of the verandah posts will soon be covered with climbing roses, and one hopes that the dining-hall and classrooms may one day be frescoed by boys attending our secondary schools. A better conceived and executed scheme of its kind it would not be easy to imagine; it should stand as something of an achievement in the realm of education.

Scope and Character of the Service

It would appear essential that the sphere of work, in such a city as Bradford, should be divided into areas; each area being perfectly free, after the recognition of a few broad principles, to work out its own salvation. When I have endeavoured to outline a few of the working details involved in such an area, I shall try to state something further regarding the more intimate association between the doctor and the life of a school.

It is of primary importance that the choice of such an area be carefully weighed, and in the weighing such details as the following must be considered: the number of schools, their departments, their geographical distribution, and the number of children attending the same, so that it may be roughly known how many children

entering and leaving school will have to be examined under the Board of Education regulations during the year. Then perhaps, as in Bradford, there may be an examination, carried out on the same comprehensive lines as in the case of ' entrants ' and ' leavers ', of children aged 11, with a view to stopping such children from becoming half-time workers in the mills as may not be physically fit. These details are necessary for the planning of the doctor's time-sheet and for the decision as to how many doctors and nurses, if more than one of each, may be necessary.

Many items of work, besides routine examinations, have to be considered. The geographical distribution of the schools is a most important matter in the production of a smoothly moving organization. One must remember that the convenience of situation of a clinic may make all the difference between the attendance or non-attendance of a mother and child at the clinic, not to mention continued regularity or irregularity of attendance, and this means much when viewed from the standpoint of the child's welfare. It is essential in selecting the schools for a given area to bear in mind the tram and other transit possibilities connecting schools, homes, and clinic. Such details as the foregoing not only affect the number of schools or scholars served by each clinic, but also determine the choice of site for the clinic. Thus it may seem advisable to allow one or several schools to be more remote than the ideal prompts, if thereby the clinic may be so situated as to influence more immediately several schools in a denser and poorer neighbourhood ; for it is such that are more in need of medical supervision from both the point of view of the scholar and of school hygiene.

These considerations of place and time lead to the consideration of the proportion and nature of the work it were best to allot to the individual doctor, and to the ways in which it should be done. It will be clear that the physician must do a certain number of routine inspec-

tions, and experience here would indicate that these cannot be done too carefully, but that they should not, under more or less ideal conditions, absorb more than two days out of the five and a half working days of each week. Let us suppose that he devotes Thursday and Friday of each week to the inspection in school premises of such numbers of children as he can do thoroughly on Board of Education requirements; it is then necessary to arrive at some estimate of the numbers he may justly be expected to do and the best way of doing them. Here it may be stated at once that of the data required there are some which may and should be dealt with more satisfactorily by a nurse visiting the school previously, and some which may not be so undertaken. I say 'more satisfactorily' because she will find the children unprepared and get a juster estimate of the clothing, the footgear, the cleanliness of body and head; so often at an inspection the child comes 'touched up' for the occasion. The nurse may ascertain, and record as far as possible, from the head-teacher and the child the occupation of the parents, the previous illnesses and family medical history; she may record the height and weight and finally the vision of each eye separately by Snellen's test-type, after careful preliminary instruction. All this is a great help and saving of time to the doctor, although it yet remains for him to corroborate statements about illness, and, if the parent is present, about the family history. Even when a nurse has done this work beforehand the doctor should not attempt, even though he could, to examine more than twenty children in each session, i.e. forty a day. This number, if all the parents attend, involves occasionally a sense of hurry which is above all to be avoided. The slightest feeling of hurry, of time-pressure, produces inefficient work, and, what is worse, dread or fear in the children that are being examined. The physician and the child must both be as composed as possible; hurry distorts the face and demeanour of the physician, and

alarms the infant even more than the child of twelve. So your school-physician is to examine every week eighty children who are entering or leaving school. He should not be expected to do more of work of this nature which may so easily and fatally become rather mechanical. To carry on an inquiry into details which call for strain of eyes and ears along similar lines for more than two days in the week, or at most two and a half days, is not to be expected of the human brain and body, if accurate work and solid benefits to the child and school are expected.

With regard to the other days in the week, it is essential that two half-days, preferably Wednesday and Saturday morning, be devoted to a clinic for general diseases. Let us assume that the whole of Monday is devoted to the examination of children with defective sight at the clinic. Again it is necessary to state that satisfactory work can only result if not too many children be sent for examination. In Bradford it is the practice to send notices to twelve parents asking them to attend with their children in the morning, and to send for a similar number in the afternoon. Twelve children may appear a small number to the public and perhaps to those working in the often crowded out-patient departments of our hospitals, but there is much preliminary work—questions to be asked, distant vision tested and recorded, and belladonna instilled into the eyes before the actual work with the ophthalmoscopic mirror can be undertaken. And there is another reason why not more than twelve children should be attended to in the three hours. The work differs essentially from hospital work because children, not adults, are being dealt with, and there is much to be elicited from parent and child if one desires to ascertain, eventually, the cause of poor sight and squint in children. The work is preventive; its preventive nature must be kept uppermost, and for this reason it differs somewhat from work of this character ordinarily carried out by the physician; it is almost a new sphere and opens up many mysteries calling

for the closest attention and analysis before they can be explained.

In addition to these new 'cases' other children attend, and herein lies another reason why it is important that the physician should have time left over from routine work. Many children, and a necessarily increasing number, attend for re-examination so that one may ascertain if and how much the sight has improved with the use of correcting glasses, whether headaches and symptoms of eye-strain have disappeared, or whether spectacles prescribed previously are suitable. This section of children considerably extends the amount to be done, so that if the work is to be given its logical outcome it is essential that only a certain number, say six, of these children requiring subsequent supervision be sent for on each half of Monday; for the children requiring supervision are *all* the children. An untold number of children might have the sight of one or both eyes vastly improved, in some cases even saved, solely by a continued and persevering patience and a willingness to consider the so-called trifling details which are encountered. Every school medical officer who has done 'eye-work' could give examples of what might be described without exaggeration as 'sight restored to the blind', but it involves a good deal of time in letter-writing to teachers and perhaps parents. Every child who attends the clinic for errors of refraction is re-examined at least every six months, it may be within a month of the first attendance. Surgical cases are referred to the consulting surgeon to whom reference has already been made.

Wednesday afternoon might be devoted to the examination and treatment of children suffering from otorrhœa—'running ear'—recent or chronic. The treatment of this condition is simple, amounting to cleanliness or mild antisepsis; the causation is complex, and though much is known or may be hazarded, much is obscure and baffling. There can be little doubt that, as with the great bulk of

diseases in elementary school children, the cause is primarily weakened resistance to disease brought about by insufficient or unsuitable feeding, or both, combined with parental ignorance of the simplest rules of domestic hygiene. There is no doubt that regular daily treatment is markedly beneficial, however slow and tedious the progress may be and almost invariably is; the hearing is saved, if not already destroyed, and usually bettered, in some instances restored to normal from the point of view of school and life usefulness. Again one has the final resort, if necessary—the surgeon.

The 'general clinic' will of necessity be the biggest clinic numerically, and yet again I would insist upon the strict control of numbers here also. Parents may sit and wait from 11 a.m. till 3 p.m., but it is not good either for them, their children or the doctor. Forty is a sufficient number. To this clinic come various children, those brought by parents of their own free will, those referred by head-teachers and attendance-officers, those asked to attend for further examination and advice subsequent upon examination at school, and finally those who have attended previously but who continue to come for renewed examination and treatment. Now it will be readily understood that with all these sources of supply the numbers are bound to increase, and that authorities must be prepared to cope with the increase. These 'cases' are made up of the following diseases: bronchitis in its various forms, phthisis and suspected phthisis, heart disease, rickets and malnutrition, external eye diseases, skin diseases, and nervous disorders. Children suffering from ringworm avoid a long-continued attendance by being subjected to X-rays treatment.

Cases of phthisis and suspected phthisis are referred to the tuberculosis dispensary, thereby obviating notification and bringing the home condition more directly under the notice of the sanitary inspector. Some other cases, again, may be referred to the school surgeon for diseases of ear, nose, or throat.

Finally, we must consider what work may most profitably be undertaken on the one remaining day in the week of our scheme. A great field remains, full of work just as important, if not more so, than the foregoing. All that one can do is to mention some of the items which call for the attention of the school physician or such attention as he is able to give on the one remaining day. In the first place it would be well if on one half of this day he devoted his time to one of the special schools, which are: the school for the deaf, school for the blind, school for the mentally defective, school for cripples, or the open-air school. In a city such as Bradford, which necessitates this division into areas, there will of course be several assistant medical officers, and it is better that each physician devote himself to that section which offers the greatest appeal to his mind and heart. This principle has been adopted in Bradford; one assistant is now devoting almost his whole time to the examination of the mentally defective on lines suggested by the recent Act, others are working on certain half-days in the week or on one half-day at one or more of the above-mentioned schools.

The medical and surgical provision for school children should be complete, should be a unity. The local authority should supply every surgical and medical need.

One hears a good deal of talk nowadays about inspection clinics and treatment clinics. Putting aside the word 'clinic', which seems unsuitable and misleading, I do not consider that it is possible to draw such a distinction. However hard one might try merely to inspect, it would be difficult to avoid some suggestion of prevention or cure, either or both of which come curiously near to 'treatment'. The great proportion of clinic cases it would be absurd to refer to another doctor, for they require but a few words of advice with regard to rest, open air, and food. Therefore 'treatment', so far as the present position of affairs is involved, would appear to be straightforward,

and needs no further comment until we arrive at our next subject.

In my reference to Dr. Crowley's report many grave facts were revealed. Something has been attempted to right these wrongs, but one must admit that owing to the enormous number of requisite examinations of various kinds the work of re-inspection in the schools, of ascertaining the nature and thoroughness of the treatment, has had to be considerably curtailed. The attention given to the supervision of the physical condition and progress in education of the deaf and blind has been inadequate and unsatisfactory. Moreover, in work of such dimensions there is always a tendency to the production of a machine, at the great cost of forgetting the human side, which should be uppermost. I do not say that Bradford is altogether guilty in this respect, but the over-pressure of routine work has previously had its effect. Though there has been thoroughness in much of the treatment, there has been surprisingly small contribution of late years to experiment and research, to the revelation of those elusive factors at the root of disease with its train of defects and distortions.

Wholesale inspection, valuable though it has been, has meant, and always will mean, the flooding of the clinics. Efficiency of treatment results inevitably in the exclusion of many children from attendance at school, and here we come to a great issue between the school medical department and the department of education. A great number of children have been excluded from school for varying periods—the greater number for much longer than was necessary had more suitable channels of education been open to them—because there is comparatively little open-air accommodation and no real provision as yet for the simply ' delicate ' who are not fit for whole-day attendance. The effect has been not an outspoken but an evident objection to the reduction of

attendances so caused. The only reason for this objection, so far as I am able to see, must be that a head teacher's quality and attainment are still judged to some extent from a numerical or material standpoint. The fact is that recent education has been proved wrong in aim and method, and has to be altered if it is to harmonize with changing conditions of life and thought. The school for cripple children is a step towards a better state of adjustment.

There has arisen lately the inevitable problem how far and how best to link the school medical service with that of the public health service. If a city is big and the work of the school medical service has to be divided into districts, the assistant school medical officer of an area comprising, say, some twenty-five schools, should have intimate knowledge of all that concerns the public health of his district, or at least of the housing conditions and conditions of parental work. It is waste of time and money for children to be cleansed if they may as quickly be made filthy or verminous again at home, or if those attending the open-air school are allowed to return at night to conditions of stuffiness and squalor; or if those fed on the wholesome diet supplied by the canteen committee at breakfast and dinner centres return to irregular, hastily-prepared, unsuitable meals at home.

It is, therefore, clear that our aim should be to make the public health service a complete unity, and that though there may necessarily be certain divisions, yet there need be no hard and fast lines as to the distribution of the work. It may seem advisable for one man to devote one or two half-days to the problems offered by tuberculosis, another to bacteriology, another to housing. Personally I hope that the centre of his activity will always be the school, but his scope will depend upon the willingness of the public to treat the child justly and expend whatever is needed to ensure it. It is a multitude

of little evils that beset the child, and the social idealist must be prepared to study detail if he wishes to secure justice.

At present the scope of the school medical officer's work is limited by the nature of the educational system that existed before his office was created. The full effect of his work will not be felt until that system is modified. The term 'elementary school' may never go, but the contrast for which it stands, the contrast between it and the comparative opulence implied by the term 'secondary school' will go, must go along with its ugly brother 'class distinction'. With regard to our 'special schools' there can be little doubt that the association of the physician with them has brought, and may bring, much good. There are many small yet helpful suggestions which may occur to the physician and not to those daily absorbed in the teaching, for, as the blind man says in Synge's play, 'I'm thinking by the mercy of God it's few sees anything but them is blind for a space'. The officer who undertakes work for the deaf children will have much to absorb his patience, his reasoning and persuasive powers. He will perchance have to argue and re-argue with committee and parents the advisability of their children receiving early training between the ages of two and seven, and of discussing and rediscussing the best way of bringing it into actuality. Similarly he will have to work for the extension of school-age for these children to eighteen, and the provision of suitable premises and appliances in event of its being undertaken. He will have to persuade local institutions for the deaf to throw over their methods of encouraging intercourse by gesticulation and fingers and conform with the school method of aiming at improved lip-reading and speech. He will have to see that the children are trained in such suitable handicrafts as that they may go direct from school at the age of eighteen into the workshops of the city, and take their place honourably amongst their more fortunate hearing

companions. He will have to help in the organization of special classes for the semi-deaf, the semi-mute, and the 'hard of hearing'. When he has helped in these things he will have done something for these children who are perhaps of all children the most to be pitied. He will find still more to do. The assistant school medical officer might spend half a day in the week watching the physical instruction given in the schools, and giving his advice he may save much actual harm. Again, there is call for a careful inquiry into the relation of unsuitable desks and bad lighting to the production of eye-strain and defective sight. We need investigation into the effect of school feeding upon the physical and mental condition of children. Some children cannot digest the meals provided; the school doctor should discover why they cannot, and arrange, if required, a diet graduated to the capacities of those long fed insufficiently or wrongly. Amongst all these considerations the school doctor has to acquire the continued, hearty co-operation of teachers, nurses, charitable agencies and committees—not the easiest of tasks!

Mention of 'special schools' suggests a warning with regard to open-air schools in general: great care needs to be exercised in the selection of children suffering from lung diseases. A child in whom phthisis is suspected, or who is in any stage of the disease except that known as 'incipient', that is to say, any child who is not definitely free from possibilities of infection, should not be allowed to attend at such a school. There is urgent need of open-air schools to accommodate these incipient and suspected cases, and still more urgent need of properly equipped sanatoria for those sad cases where no doubt exists, and the percentage of them is, I am convinced, much above the one stated. Our tuberculosis dispensaries are excellent as diagnostic agencies, but almost useless without a background of ample sanatorial accommodation. Nor will our care for the ailments of children be complete without provision of outdoor work for the epileptic; there will be

at least twenty of these children in the city of Bradford urgently requiring such provision, and at least another thirty who would be better for it. One hopes that the lives of these children will soon be made brighter and less monotonous than at present by a wide adoption on the part of our education committees of open-air schools and residential homes.

II. REFLECTIONS

Battling with big forces creates in the strong man heroism; so the fine race of seafaring men, so the occasional superb flower of healthy genius, so sometimes the most exquisite tree out of rocky ground: so perhaps with the growth of this new force in the child's garden. For two of its moving spirits rose in Bradford, a hard, stony manufacturing town, something of whose hardness seems to have entered into and fashioned the soul of its indwellers. Here, amid whirr of looms, rumble of heavy traffic, under the almost constant pall of smoke, and in the rude elbowing of commercial bargaining, arose the champions of the elementary scholar, and the first blow was struck for justice to the individual child, justice for his physical pride and well-being.

Now, if the physician can bring, as he has done, such untold assistance to the child's development by these his first and simplest pieces of advice, how much more may we not unwisely assume he might bring, were he allowed to put his finger upon the other sores which he has noticed and say 'here and here are diseases or defects which are stemming vitality of body and mind—here and here is unhealthiness which you may overcome in time and restore to health, if you will only allow yourselves to watch and see, and to go to the natural, the simplest remedy, which is invariably the best'. Lister, like all who have created blessing for the children of men, went to Nature and watched her patiently, that he might find his way of

bringing relief to preventible pain and death; and we shall have to look to her, as he did, if we are going to stop and prevent sepsis in the education of the child. The education of our children is almost the only path to social or any other regeneration.

Now to the physician who has had for some few years the opportunity of unprejudiced glimpses into the education which is going on in our elementary schools there are certain features which at once strike him as being bad, and others as being excellent, but the former outweigh the latter. He is appalled to find little children of three years being subjected to any form, however admirable in certain items, of daily routine, and of the herding together of such small children in what is, after all, very limited and imperfect space from the point of view of the active, growing child. There is no doubt that the education given in our infant departments has evolved, and is evolving, healthily, so much so that a terrible gulf has arisen, as yet unbridged, between this department and the mixed. But there is also no doubt that the minds and bodies of such little ones are needlessly injured even yet, and that some defective, seriously defective, sight, and also mental strain, are the results of the excessive use of the unformed, developing eye and of the enforced output of energy *which is required of all alike, irrespective of temperament and physique.*

Routine should be kept out of the life of the growing child as long as possible; it has nothing to do with healthy discipline and should not be confounded with this. We have now copious statistics to show—we need so much, so long convincing before we see anything—what a large proportion of children commence their education who are below the standard of healthy nutrition or who have physical defects of various kinds that make it almost impossible for them to continue to hold up their heads above the restless, exciting stream of competition which goes on in the upper school. How economical it would be, apart from all aesthetic consideration, could we curtail or even

check the production of this grave and unnecessary state of affairs.

Before we can attempt this by considering and remodelling our children's education up to the age of seven or eight, we shall have finally, once and for all, to sweep clean away the everlasting obstruction of payment-by-result, or rather its more subtle but equally objectionable modern equivalent and offshoot-absurdity of the system, the transference of a child at a certain fixed age from one department to another quite irrespective of mental or physical fitness for transference. Any head mistress of any infant department will tell you this—that she cannot do with her children what most of her inspectors expect her to do—have every child ready to leave her by the age of seven.

The next thing which strikes one as bad, as wrong in both departments, although the upper is always the dark offender, is what one can only call 'the lopsidedness' of the education. The brain has more senses or attributes than one, although it would appear that many of our educationists think that it has only one, called 'memory'. There is hardly an item in the curriculum which does not call upon the unfortunate centre where memory abides, and though the item may not in itself be wrong or unsuitable, this everlasting, omnipresent method of memorizing is wrong, and damaging to the mental evolution. The result is that an unnecessary strain is placed upon the child's mind with no beneficial result to compensate for the strain; for memory becomes easy after the habit of reasoning has been developed, and that habit must be developed first. This over-emphasis of the memory is only one example of the great defect of the present system, that it is based on a misunderstanding of the nature of the child. If careful inquiry be made into each subject it will, I think, be found that memory plays a heavy, excessive part, and initiative practically no part; so that the final product is far too often a child with little spontaneity of thought or

expression, helpless before any strange experience which calls for subtlety of thought or adaptability of body, a poor stunted physical frame, the result of an overtaxed, tight-twisted nervous system. It would be well, therefore, to consider briefly what we mean by 'a child'. We shall never get any further until we consider it, not briefly, but for long; and here is my version.

One might write volumes about the various characteristics and peculiarities, the whims and caprices, the logicalities and extravagances, the brutalities and spiritualities of childhood, but one may also say briefly that every little girl is an immature but otherwise complete mother; every little boy, if you give him tools, a complete and independent being in his own world and his own rights. Education in the past has been based too much on a study —an imperfect study—of adult psychology, and has been related to the needs of the adult as workman, instead of being based on child-study and adapted to the nature and needs of the child. They are, little girls and boys, even more than men and women, 'merely players'; they live in their own world, and, as R. L. Stevenson, who more than any man before or since seems to have understood the child's outlook, says, 'they walk in a vain show and amongst mists and rainbows, they are passionate after dreams and unconcerned about realities'.

Therefore it is that I claim that every school for children, up to the age of eight years at least, should be merely a stage for these little men and women to rehearse, without the bitterness or restraint that may await them, the romance of a childhood that is growing up. Therefore it is that I would aim at eventually destroying all infant schools, where so many are between the tender ages of three and five, and substituting open-air nurseries, as near the heart of the great Mother Nature as possible, with dolls and hoops and trumpets instead of chairs and desks and pencils, and providing a mother whose outstanding qualifications shall be 'motherliness' and 'humour', who will try

to instil into her brood no moral lesson except that of never hurting any one or any thing alive.

Now the evolution of the child's mind follows very closely the evolution of the instincts of the race; and the child, like the units of a primitive race, must first be allowed to make his excited movements, to leap when he beholds a rainbow in the sky, because his heart leaps and bids his legs leap; and side by side with this motor expression is developed almost naturally that other early expression of emotion, speech; these two faculties should be the first to receive suitable channels for their expansion. These motor and speech expressions need sooner or later a certain guidance; we cannot allow them to develop altogether 'willy-nilly', for we should then be falling below the level of the higher animal kingdom. The child has to learn to leap or dance with his fellows, and to control his communicative instincts by acting with his fellows, because only so can his feelings and movements gain rhythm, intensity, permanence—intensity and collectivity being as indispensable to ritual as ritual is to real religious feeling and art, and religious feeling to life itself. Open-air stages for dance and dramatic action, the two fairy-sisters of Castle Make-Believe, are the almost only requirements for the early years—also, of course, a piano or a violin with respectable tones.

What was it in the evolution of the mind of man that was adopted, after speech, for the attainment of his record of thought?—'Drawing'. Man first wrote through the medium of pictures, the alphabet being simply an invented artifice for expressing thought more quickly. But, however convenient this quicker mode of progression may be, it remains still more suitable, more safe for the older people than the children. Before we can write an object it is necessary for the brain first to recall it; drawing offers such intermediate and kindly aid, and has the double advantage of being at once expressive and fixative.

Hence my next contention, that drawing should come

before writing and before the alphabet in the ladder of education, so that nothing is wanted much more than a piano, some dresses perhaps, though these and other accoutrements are not essential, some blackboards or brown paper and chalks to equip our educational surroundings for children up to the age of seven or eight. Surely this must appeal to our sense of economy, it is so cheap! Were good homes, good mothers, and easy access to gardens available for all, we should not need even these open-air nurseries.

The experience of the school medical officer has suggestions for the later stages of education as well as for the earlier. It is in the earlier, however, that the greatest need exists for a complete change in society's attitude towards education; it is in the earlier that the revolution towards which the school medical officer's experience points must be effected first. For a child is an exquisitely beautiful, complex animal, whose moral guardianship is safest in the hands of a good mother and a good doctor.

As indications of the influence medical inspection may be expected to have, an example may be given. It is that the existing sharp division of education into elementary and secondary has, as I have previously hinted, no meaning whatsoever for the physician. Studying the child as a child and not as a member of an artificially-created social class, what he sees is continuous growth, which calls for continuous attention. The break, if a break must be made in the school system, must be made on physical and physiological grounds, not as at present on purely economic grounds; the distinction must be drawn, not between elementary school and secondary school, but between the school of the child and the school of the adolescent, no division of any kind being permitted save such as arises from mental or physical inequality—backward and normal children, normal and supernormal, not being allowed to hinder and ruin each other.

At present society treats the period of adolescence as

the period during which the child should be forced from all customary discipline and care, and plunged into industry, to sink or swim as its own unaided powers decide. The time is ripe for those who are directly concerned with education in this country to listen to the advice of those who have studied the physiology and psychology of the child, for it behoves us, with the present wanton destruction of adult life, to do all in our power to ensure the very best mental and physical equipment for life that we can to the generations of the near future.

At present the only mitigations of this treatment are based on economic grounds. The rich child and a small selection of the other children are given a secondary education, and the needs of industry have secured for the rest only a modicum of technical evening-schooling. But if the educational system paid due regard to the experience of the physician, whose training in observation and direct contact with life gives him a unique understanding of the human character and needs, the position would be very different. The period of adolescence would be recognized as at once the most dangerous and the most fruitful in possibilities for good of all the ages. The educational system would be adapted to guarding the growing generation against the dangers of adolescence and affording all scope for its possibilities. The half-time system, the exploitation of juvenile labour, the stinting of secondary education and adaptation of the continuation schools to purely commercial and selfish ends, would take on a new aspect as the deliberate perversion and waste of human life.

Those who are entrusted with the care of children from eight years of age to thirteen or fourteen must be professional listeners and watchers, using all their ears and eyes to the utmost to detect the trend of individual character. The man who has to drum certain figments of history, arithmetic, or literature through the straining and strained ears of his audience has no time for this, and moreover it follows ill upon the custom of these actively-happy children

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from the open-air nurseries. What, therefore, I would suggest must come, as better for the moral, mental, and physical well-being of our children, is the eventual substitution for existing mixed departments of well-ventilated sheds or workshops, side by side with such class-rooms as already exist in our open-air schools, sheds provided with lathes, hammers, planes, files, axes, saws, spades, hoes, and various gardening instruments instead of such destructive influences as benches, desks, pens and copy-books ; reading to be the last thing encouraged up to the age of ten, except —a big exception—as it shows itself a necessity, an urgent demand from the child.

There is no subject that cannot be presented more effectively in such a workshop school than in the present-day type of school, no quality of virtue and righteousness that cannot be more spontaneously acquired, no sphere of activity and thought that could not be more easily conquered before the time comes for the greater perfecting of sentiment and reason. I think, also, we should more carefully distinguish between the education of our boys and our girls. It is best in the girls' garden to assume the ultimate flower of motherhood, and let our training be the most perfect equipment for that which we can provide, always giving our first consideration to the girl's more delicate, more subtle, more variable physical economy, but ensuring that each healthy girl has one calling in which she is efficient and upon which she may, if motherhood do not claim her for a time, be able to support herself honourably and well. With both girls and boys let us bestir ourselves, as we have not done yet, to ensure them at the great crisis of their lives, at the dawn of womanhood and manhood, that spiritual, emotional stimulus and food for which, at this time, every human organism cries out. Let us place within their reach at this, the proper time, the best literature and art of all kinds, of all countries, everything which can unfold before their wakening eyes the supreme miracle, the miracle of Creation.

If, after the age of thirteen or fourteen, we are to present our future generation with that great panorama of the evolving life of this country and all the other countries on the Continent and in the Far East, as we should do, and are to cultivate the raw material of boyhood into the master-workman of every craft and profession, we cannot, so it seems to me, absorb his early, impressionable years in the acquirement of any language, living or dead, in the hope that he may read or speak them with difficulty later; but we should and must absorb them in fitting him to meet and conquer the changing turns of fortune in this ever-quickly-changing world.

'The business of life', says Mr. Chalmers Mitchell in his delightful book, *The Childhood of Animals*, 'is to meet a continuous series of emergencies by prompt and unhesitating action, and this is accomplished best by those animals who have had the longest youth, the best opportunity of playing at life whilst it was still a game, and for making mistakes when mistakes mattered least. Education should be a parade of all handicrafts, of all mental and emotional stimulations, of the arts and sciences, and the last thing to be considered is what is practically useful. The supreme duty of youth is to try all things, to experiment with everything, to be scatterbrained rather than concentrated.'

In due time the world will certainly close round and press each beginner of life in one direction, but he will meet the pressure most successfully who has remained young longest and who has stored up the most varied experience.

AUSTIN PRIESTMAN.

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